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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FEDERAL EXTENSION SERVICE
Washington 25, D. C.

THE ROLE OF THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATION

The complex interdependence of the different segments of our society makes it imperative that those engaged in agriculture maintain a constant awareness of the overall movements in the total economy.

Many issues in the nature of public affairs, most of which have local implications, arise from these relationships. Extension is called upon for assistance in analyzing these issues and to provide facts about related programs.

Extension programs grow out of the social and economic needs and carefully analyzed wants of local people. Educational work in public affairs becomes an inseparable part of these programs as they are developed by local people and as the Extension Service attempts to help people meet these needs.

Extension work in public affairs is based upon the assumptions that:

1. The durability of representative government requires an informed citizenry. Education includes providing information based on facts. Given facts and methods for their analysis, people have a better basis for making intelligent decisions.
2. There is general recognition that the understanding of issues has important impacts upon the ability of rural people to manage their resources to the benefit of themselves and the larger society.
3. Rural people as citizens are concerned about public issues and are seeking understanding as to their effect and implications upon their welfare.
4. Land-grant colleges (through the Extension Service) as public educational institutions, have an important obligation in this area and a responsibility to help people understand issues affecting them.
5. It is a function of Extension Service to provide relevant background public information which will help to create a better understanding of why certain problems have come about and to provide information on alternative actions that could help to alleviate these problems. The Extension Service avoids taking a position with respect to policies which should be adopted but, in so far as professional knowledge will permit, points out the economic or social consequences of various alternative courses of action.



6. It is the function of the people, individually and collectively, to arrive at their own answers and solutions, and to build policies to bring about these solutions. Extension has an obligation to provide the facts and the analysis of information which organized groups and individuals can use in making their own decisions.

7. The Extension Service recognizes the importance of strong organizations and will lend professional assistance in so far as appropriate to organizations in the development of programs of public affairs education.

8. Implementation of decisions by organizations as they counsel and advise with bodies politic is the responsibility of organized groups of citizens -- not that of a public education institution.

9. The function of the Federal Extension Service in public affairs education is that of helping with counseling and training of State and county staff members in the most effective teaching methods and in providing facts concerning public affairs topics of current interest.

10. The function of the State Extension Staff in public affairs education is one of helping with counseling and training of State and county staff members in the most effective teaching methods and in providing facts concerning public affairs topics of current interest.

11. The function of the County Extension Staff in public affairs education is one of counseling and training local leaders and groups in developing an understanding of facts and issues pertaining to public problems and possible alternative solutions.

